



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

EXHIBIT 10
DATE 4/9/2013
SB 397

Testimony in Opposition to S.B. 397
Presented to the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
April 9, 2013
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I am testifying today in opposition to Senate Bill 397 which would authorize the opening of a provisional bear hound hunting season in Montana, and also allow the use of cruel and inhumane snares for wolves. This legislation is entirely unnecessary as Montana already has successful fair chase bear hunting and legislation was already passed this year to expand wolf hunting. The overzealous wolf hunting season contained in this bill is reminiscent of the same practices that put wolves under federal control in the first place.

Enacting hound hunting here would fly in the face of Montana's nearly century-old hunting tradition. According to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks 2011 bear report: "Since the mid-1990s, Montana's annual black bear harvest has averaged 4th in the nation behind Washington, Oregon, and Idaho in numbers of bears harvested.... Approximately 1,000 black bears are harvested annually in Montana . . . *This is accomplished without the use of baits or hounds.*"¹

Our state prides itself on fair-chase bear hunting and that is acknowledged in the same Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks 2011 report. It reads: "*Montana offers world renowned, fair-chase black bear hunting, and black bears are a highly treasured big game animal in Montana....Use of dogs to hunt black bears or grizzly bears was prohibited in Montana in 1921....The harvesting of cubs or females with cubs, was prohibited in 1947, followed by a prohibition of the use of baits in 1948. With these regulations in place, black bear hunting became more of a fair chase sport in Montana.*"²

Responsible hunters adhere to the principle of fair-chase—they want a reasonable chance for the animal to get away. There is nothing fair about a pack of trained hounds wearing high-tech collars running down a bear or shooting the exhausted animal off a tree limb.

Given Montana's grizzly bear population, allowing bear hounding here would be especially concerning. Grizzlies don't tree as readily as black bears, and dogs are not always selective in which bear species they target. Allowing bear hounding would put dogs and threatened grizzlies at risk of injury or death. Given that dogs are killed and seriously injured by black bears, one can only imagine the harm that a grizzly bear could inflict. Montana is right to protect dogs from being put in situations where they're prone to be torn apart by a grizzly bear and we've protected them for nearly a century—it would be absurd to reverse course now.

In addition, allowing the use of snares on wolves is an incredibly cruel and ineffective method for predator management. Snares use a wire loop to catch and choke to death any animal that gets caught in it. Unfortunately, this non-discriminatory trap catches non-target wildlife and even pets. .

Montana already has the tools to manage these wildlife species – snaring and hounding are simply unnecessary. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose SB 397. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Mace, Richard D. and Tonya Chilton-Radant. "Black Bear Harvest Research and Management in Montana 2011 Final Report." Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. 2011. p. vii, p. 5.

² Ibid, p.1, p. 45.